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ABSTRACT

Current educational philosophies stress the need to personalize education. Emphasis must be placed on the needs and interests of individuals, and curricula must be constructed to enable students to actualize their own potentialities. The humanizing curriculum centers on the student, and the teacher helps to plan, guide, and evaluate the individual rather than to transmit selected facts. Four types of humanizing curricula are being introduced that differ primarily in their view of the centrality of man in his relations with his environment. One type emphasizes humanities instruction, while the other three conceive of man as (1) a social creature, (2) a unique individual, and (3) an introspective analyst. (Author/RA)

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"What is a Humanizing Curriculum?"

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In order to focus upon the topic to be considered today I would like to quote from a few people who have been concerned about education in America.

> "The traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly toward maturity. The gap is so great that the required subject matter, the methods of learning and of behaving are foreign to the existing capacities of the young. They are beyond the reach of the experience the young learners already possess. Consequently they must be imposed; even though good teachers will use devices of art to cover up the imposition so as to relieve it of obviously brutal forces. Learning here means acquisition of what is already incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders."

This statement was made, not be Friedenberg, Kozol, et.al., but rather by John Dewey more than three decades ago. I'm not sure of your reaction, but I find its relation to the current educational scene rather frightening. However, the purpose of this presentation is not to condemn but rather to suggest possible alternatives. For example, Whitehead has said, also more than three decades ago, "The students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self-development."

It is necessary then for us to recognize that what American education is facing today is not a few radicals who are currently persuasive but who might prove evanescent in nature, but rather a full blown evolutionary change. This change is being supported by many of the more prestigious educational theorists in our nation at this time. For example, John Goodlad has raised the question as to whether today's schools are obsolescent. "...designed for a different culture, a different conception of learners and a different clientele."

It might be important at this juncture to indicate what a humanizing curriculum is not. Many misconceptions have arisen, some of which seem to have been born almost conjointly with the basic concepts of humanistic education. Let me state that, for example, a humanizing curriculum is not a "watering down" of content. Rather it will require a commitment to excellence on the part of

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both the student and the teacher which should precipitate a qualitative improvement in education rather than a quantitative increase.

It also is not an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher who would succumb to the unreasonable demands of a militant group of rebellious adolescents. It is rather the refocusing of the talents of the teacher toward his role as a facilitator of learning rather than a transmitter of moribund knowledge.

It is also not a denigration of the leadership role of the teacher. A teacher must know more content in order to guide than to dictate; he must know the students better, he must be a better leader (as opposed to being a dictator) in order to achieve the purposes of a humanizing curriculum.

Rationale

This brings us to the question: "What is a Humanizing Curriculum?" There is at present no single definition which would be entirely satisfactory as a description of the movement which seeks to humanize education. What we are witnessing is a dynamic phenomenon resulting from the tremendous impact of technology and systems-analysis management on the school curriculum as well as the effects of the period of rapid social change through which our culture is currently moving. (These powerful forces have led to a de-personalization of the schools.) In response to these forces many educational leaders have called for: a renewed emphasis on the development of the innate creativity of the individual; an increased awareness of the centrality and importance of human values - moral, ethical and aesthetic; and a realization that the current compartmentalization of knowledge and experience will <u>not</u> provide a basis for the development of individuals able to withstand, control and direct the de-personalizing pressures to which we are being subjected. A humanizing curriculum can perhaps be best identified as that curriculum which has as its central focus the study of the

alternative value commitments open to man in order to reveal the differences that his choices make and the kind of humanity that develops from them.

You will note that these statements are not particularly radical. It is not my intent here to present revoluationary ideas which you will find difficult to accept. Rather, I would hope to indicate some of the obvious curricular implications from some basic ideas with which we are all familiar and which most of us can accept.

It would seem that, throughout the history of mankind, the primary purpose of schools has been to serve the needs and purposes of the culture in which they were located. If the culture changed, and in doing so, revised its demands upon them, the schools changed. I suspect that we would not have to step far from this room to witness the vast changes in culture which have recently taken place. However, conceptualizing on an even broader cultural base we have been told by Mumford in his book, The Culture of Cities, that we are entering a new stage which he classified as biotechnic. In that stage he felt that biological sciences would be applied to technology, and that technology would be oriented toward humanity. Another cultural historian, Sorokin has expressed the concept of two basic types of culture found in human history. He classifies these as sensate and ideaticnal, and sees the dominant current societies as being in the process of a fundamental change at this time. His solutions to the problems inherent within such a cultural change are: "Our remedy demands a complete change of the contemporary mentality, a fundamental transformation of our system of values, and the profoundest modification of our conduct toward other men, cultural values, and the world at large."

Is there a possibility of such profound fundamental changes within the framework of man within our present society? This does not seem to be a really valid question at this point in history. We seemingly are not in a position

for decision making at this time We are rather in the position of being in a canoe running a series of rapids. We can not make a decision to stop and go back Our only alternatives are whether to turn left, turn right or move straight ahead as we attempt as our first priority, to keep the canoe afloat.

What changes in educational theory are necessary in order to effect the innovations needed to achieve this transformation in our cultural perspective? The first basic change will be the recognition that much psychology, statistically oriented as it is, is dealing with large masses, rather than individuals and as such is more sociological in nature than psychological. The one important concept to be recognized as we consider psychology is that the central core of the individual personality is unique The idiosyncratic nature of personality requires that a rigorous and systematic investigation of individuals be conducted rather than a statistical study of masses which gives us mathema tical means to the pattern of which no one individual will conform.

In order logically to follow this path it is neccssary to move toward the actualization theories of Rogers and Maslow. According to these theories the organism pushes instinctively to become that for which it is suited by its inherent potentialities. These potentialities aim toward the basic maintenance and enhancement of life.

According to Rogers in his latest book, Freedom to Learn, the most effective learning can occur in the student if the following five criteria are achieved.

1. Personal involvement: the pupil is intrinsically aware and involved with the process of learning.
2. Self-initiated: the pupil has determined his own needs rather than having them imposed upon him.
3. Pervasive nature: the pupil changes in behavior and/or attitude because of the experience.

4. Learner evaluated: the pupil determines whether the experience was worthwhile in terms of idiosyncratic criteria.

5. Importance to learner: the pupil determines the relevance of the experience in terms of his own needs, purposes and desires.

In the final analysis according to these concepts the final determination of the worth of the educational experience is reached according to the individual perceptions of those pupils experiencing it. Under these circumstances the task of the school district is to develop an educational system which can best meet the needs of individual pupils as they strive to actualize their potentialities in such a way as to achieve the most healthy emotional, physiological and intellectual development possible to them.

Instruction

Having developed a theoretical rationale the obvious question devolves upon the school administrator as to what type of educational program might best further the curriculum objectives implicit within the healthy development of the many pupils for whom he is responsible. What experiences should the children have? What procedures should the teachers follow to insure that those experiences are available to the children?

Let us consider the last question first. In what ways can teachers aid in the humanizing of a curriculum? Let us remenber that a curriculum can be defined as the total experiences of the pupil within the supervisory framework of the school. Under those circumstances the impact of the instructor upon the curriculum will be found in four major areas of concern, among others. These are the teacher's role as 1. planner, 2. guide, 3. evaluator, and 4. model.

The teachers stance as a planner would be oonsiderably different in a humanized curriculum than in a traditional system. Ordinarily, a teacher has been expected to be familiar with the scope and sequence of the particular subject or subjects being taught. Plans then are devised to present to the

pupil the experiences which are most appropriate to insure the acquisition of the particular skills, attitudes or understanding which have been rationally determined either by teacher decision, textbook organization, syllabus arrangement and/or other externally imposed criteria.

In a humanizing curriculum the teacher will be expected to be proficient not only in being aware of the rational structure of his content but more importantly the criteria for content selection. Two major foci will come to bear at this point. First, much content must either be constructed in a more meaningful context or possibly even be deleted! No longer can everything be taught to everyone. Priorities must be set. Second, cooperative planning will become essential. If the desires of pupils are to become a major determinant in curriculum selection without a loss of teacher responsibility, the instructor must assume a role of leadership consonant with such a practice.

The teacher must also have the knowledges and abilities necessary to be able to reorganize the component elements of the curriculum. Such plans will insure the flexibility necessary for student participation in curriculum planning. Flexibillty must become a major attribute of the teacher's attitude toward learning not only in terms of content but also in regards to pupil activity. The day of thirty pupils in a room listening to one teacher is obviously passed. The teacher must be able to plan a class organization capable of responding to the needs of thirty idiosyncratic individuals.

The teacher's second role, that of a guide, is firmly bound to the concept of humanizing education. In traditional classrooms the instructor serves primarily as a transmitter of knowledge rather than as a facilitator of learning. In a humanistic education arrangement the teacher would be more knowledgeable in the location of learning resources rather than being expected to verbalize the content from those resources. The facilitation of learning would

necessitate a knowledge not only of content, but of learning skills and motivations of the learners.

Obviously the issue arises at this point as to the degree to which the teacher might work toward the development of intrinsic motivation in the pupil without losing the concept of student self-initiation of learning. The response probably relies upon another guidance role of the teacher: that of counseling in the emotional areas. A relatively sensitive instructor versed in humanistic education should be expected to place intellectual demands for a student on a different level of priorities as compared with pupil development in emotional and social areas.

The evaluation role assumed by a humanizing educator also varies from the traditional stance of the classroom teacher. Here again the instructor should assume a facilitating function. If we are to assume a self-initiated, intrinsically motivated learning experience, the importance of the self-evaluative act on the part of the student cannot be overestimated. A pupil must have a valied and accurate view as to his capabilities within the area of knowledge he has selected to explore. The teacher's primary task would be to assist the student in his self diagnosis and in his development of objectives for his learning experience. Tee utilization of the teacher-student contract plan which is a very familiar one would seem to be of great importance for the achievemnnt of these purposes.

One area of evaluation which has received increasing attention in the wake of humanistic theories is that of affective, i.e. emotional measurement. If changes in individual pupil attitudes and values are to be oonsidered as of, at the least, equal importance with intellectual development, then evaluation in the affective domain must assume equal importance to that in the cognitive domain. Certainly progress is being made in this field, and even greater effort

in the next decade will improve the validity and reliability of the measurements to a degree inconceivable a few years ago.

The fourth role of the teacher in facilitating a humanizing curriculum would encompass the task of being a model for the pupils within his responsibility. The requirements of emotional balance and intellectual capacity should not be denigrated because of the obvious nature of the demands. A teacher who is incapable of first rate intellectual effort will be severely handicapped in working toward the development of such abilities in his pupils. This is a sine qua non of teaching.

In addition, however, the teacher must be able to accept the idiosyncratic needs, desires and purposes of the individuals in his classroom. He must be a master at the dynamics of group interrelationships. Each pupil must be made to feel that he has a unique value to the world, to the class group, and to himself. This emotion can be inculcated only if the teacher has the same opinion both about the pupils and, more importantly, about himself.

If the final goal of humanizing education is the actualization of the potentialities of all facets in the development of the pupils in the school, the teacher must act as a co-planner, as a guide to activities, as a co-evaluator, and most importantly as a model of what the fully actualized pupil might become under optimal conditions.

Curriculum Guidelines

The possibility of presenting definitive guidelines for curriculum content for a humanizing education within the framework of a paper of this duration leaves me less than optimistic. However, four major foci are evident in a review of various programs being introduced throughout the country. Most humanistic education innovations can be located within the broadly outlined contexts of one of these four major conceptions of a humanizing curri-

culum. These four variations are primarily based upon differing views of the centrality of man in the complex interrelationship of the world ecology.

The most conservative of the four views of a humanizing curriculum, enough so in fact to raise some question as to its place in this report, is a humanities emphasis focused upon the complete school program. Within that approach the content of the various disciplines are utilized to develop a program which is devoted to the knowledges most commonly associated with the development of man as an entity throughout his existence. The major aspect of this focus in many cases is cognitive and intellectual in nature. A study of art, music, philosophy, sociology and other such content areas is conducted as exercises within those subjects with the pervasive force of interdisciplinary study creating a single cognitive set of objectives. An emphasis upon the emotional and physical development within such a cognitive orientation is either peripheral or based upon the incidental strengths of individually sensitive teachers, such as have been instrumental to the development of pupils no matter what the content of the course. However, it should be noted that this relatively conservative approach to a humanistic curriculum is considerably more innovative in nature than most educational programs currently found in the United States.

All of the other three curricular approaches to a humanizing education utilize man himself as the center of the program. The primary differences in their foci are the ways in which man is viewed within the curriculum framework. In the order of their departure from the traditional order, these approaches conceive of man as a social creature, man as a unique individual, and lastly, man as an introspective analyst.

A curriculum which would visualize man as a social creature could be primarily based upon such interdisciplinary topics as environmental problems,

ecology, urban problems, etc. Students would borrow content and skills from traditional disciplines to solve problems which are now, and have been common to man as a member of society. Emphasis upon the physical and emotional nature of man and their impact upon society is emphasized, with the pupil determining the personal application of that knowledge.

Man as a unique individual is a study which is conducted in a few institutions, but which is innovative enough to be seldom seen as yet. The typical curriculum in such a program would find such activities as sensitivity training, survival training for the wilderness, avocational experiences, etc. The objectives of such experiences are to develop within the pupil those characteristics most prevalent in a completely actualized person. The assumption is that content from traditional disciplines is useful only as it assists the pupil in better understanding himself in the many complex and variable settings in which he finds and will find himself.

The fourth view of a humanizing curriculum is theoretical in nature. It is not now in operation anywhere in the United States, but is being developed at the Humanistic Education Center at the State University of New York at Albany under the direction of Dr. Alvin Alschuler. In this conception the pupil would study the nature of the emotional growth of an individual in comparison with the cultural growth of man. Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach to this central problem of man, the pupil would hopefully grow in a realization of himself as an entity through a type of introspective analysis.

The basic purpose of all four of these basic variations of a humanistic curriculum is essentially similar, in that each is primarily concerned with the actualization of the potentialities inherent within each individual. Their differences are really only in the degree to which they vary from the traditional concept of content oriented learning.

In the final analysis those who would recommend a humanizing curriculum are concerned that education be personalized. No longer can education be seen as a sociological group phenomenon, but rather as an individual growth phenomenon. Content must not be learned in a meaningless manner for no purpose other than its intrinsic worth. Rather it must be utilized in a highly qualitative manner to answer some of the problems perennially faced by mankind. To do less than this in our present complex culture is to court disaster. Let us face the educational future with a view to an improvement of man and mankind through a strong commitment to the basic humanity of us all.